

IMPACT REPORT 2020



**STILL
I RISE**



one child at a time

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's message 4

Current missions 8

Donations 10

About us / Human resources 12

Organization chart / Where we work 14

Our commitment 16

Greece country profile 19

North-western Syria country profile 25

Kenya country profile 31

Turkey country profile 37

Advocacy 40

Communication and Press office 46

President's message for the Impact report 2020

NOT THANKS TO, BUT DESPITE EVERYTHING

2020 was a watershed year all around the world and Still I Rise was no exception. How could it be otherwise? We had just started pursuing our dreams, investing significant resources and running great risks, when the COVID-19 bombshell dropped on the world.

In the space of just a few weeks, both of our schools - in Greece and Turkey - had to close down. The latter was an especially hard blow because we had, after mammoth efforts, only just succeeded in opening it as the world's first international school for refugee children. So, almost before we even realized what was happening, all our hard work seemed to have come to nothing, and education was the very last thing on the world's mind. Still I Rise was still just a small organization with very big ambitions but also limited means. The onset of the pandemic risked being the end for us too. We risked collapse.

But we didn't give up.

At an historic juncture at which the world was standing still and most were sitting on their resources in the hope that things would go back to normal on their own, we chose a different path. We moved to reorientate our working model. Without wasting time, we turned our buildings into distribution centers for food, clothing and health and hygiene kits to combat the virus. Then we developed and launched an e-learning programme which we used to share

the resources and models developed in the field with thousands of Italian students, too. And lastly, we focused on working where we still could - starting work on opening a new school, this time in Syria. And this meant doing something that few else had the courage to do and felt a little crazy in the circumstances. While others were laying people off, we started hiring again.

Yes, that's right. We created jobs.

Three months after the pandemic began, we opened Ma'an, our emergency school in north-west Syria, offering top quality education and psychosocial support to students and distributing food and other items to their families in one of the world's most unstable regions. At the same time, we got humanitarian permission to send a small team to Kenya and, while most of the world stood still, we were one of the very few to embark on a new school project: the first international school for refugee and vulnerable children in Africa.

And on December 7th 2020, we finally opened our doors.

In an acutely difficult year in which many were forced to make concessions to keep afloat, it is our donors we must thank for our ability to keep going. It is together with you that we defended our independence. And it is, once again, thanks to you that we were able to get back on our feet again and do even better. We sowed the seeds of hope, not only in the field but also in Italy, precisely when it was needed most.

And this is why 2020 was the year in which our donors' trust in us grew exponentially, enabling us to raise €1,183,596 - an incredible figure almost double that of 2019. But even more importantly, this growth in trust in us was accompanied by a growth in our efficiency, too. From a single project in 2019 we moved onto a grand total of four in 2020 and still managed to use over 92% of donations on our programmes and activities, less than 5% on fundraising and only 1% on management costs, making us once again one of the most ethical, transparent and effective organizations in Italy.

We never gave up and this made the difference.

In 2020 Still I Rise moved from being a small group of volunteers to a full-blown international body, and it certainly wasn't 'thanks to' the situation, but rather 'despite' everything that was happening. We did it together and this will be our approach in the future, too. Because this is our secret - making the impossible possible.

Nicolò Govoni

President and Executive Director **SIR**



Total revenue from 2020 donations

€ 1,152,046.28

2020 Expenditures

€ 759,914.70

2020 Operating surplus

€ 392,196.42

In 2020, we spent 92.5% of our revenue on programs, and 7.4% on financial management, support, and promotion.

Costs and expenses

Current missions

€ 702,992.35

Fundraising costs

€ 35,063.82

Financing and capital costs

€ 12,416.37

Management costs

€ 9,442.16

Current missions

92.5%



Management costs

1.2%

Fundraising costs

4.6%

Financing and capital costs

1.6%



96%

2020 DONATIONS

€ 1,152,046.28

54%

2019 DONATIONS

€ 659,873.49

10%

2018 DONATIONS

€ 120,495.30



Let's grow *together*

2018 - 2019 - 2020 Donations

*Percentages on € 1,200,000

ABOUT US

Mission

Still I Rise is an international charitable body founded in 2018. Its goal is to educate, safeguard and protect refugee and vulnerable children in some of the world's refugee hotspots. Its registered head offices are in Rome and its charitable work is currently taking place in Greece, Turkey, Syria and Kenya.

Still I Rise is a fully independent organization which actively refuses funding from any government, the European Union or large international bodies and instead relies entirely on private donations.

Our values

INDEPENDENCE

We actively refuse funding from governments, supranational organizations and multinationals that we deem unethical through our code of ethics.

TRANSPARENCY

We strive to allocate the highest possible amount of donations towards our programs and activities, reducing management costs to a minimum.

EFFICIENCY

We listen to the actual needs of the people we serve and empower local communities and leaders to solve the issues they are facing.

2020 saw further growth in Still I Rise staff from five in 2019 to 66 at the end of 2020.

This increase is primarily the result of a greater recourse to **direct hiring** designed to strengthen the head offices and especially the human resources, finance, fundraising, and donor care departments and in new project implementation, especially in Turkey, Kenya and Syria.

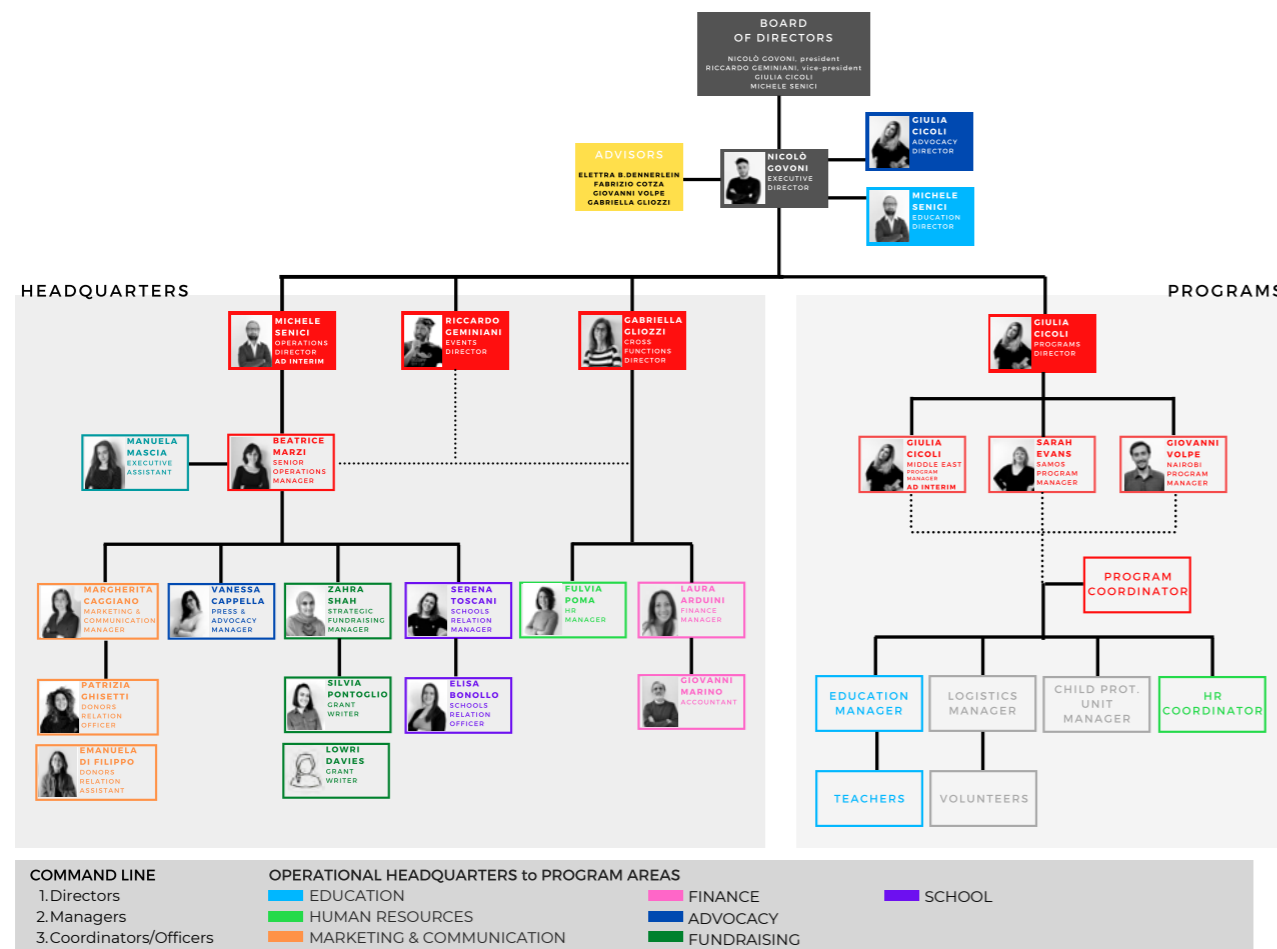
Female managerial staff numbers also grew (an increase of 250% in 2020), as did the local managerial workforce, with three managers in Turkey, Kenya and Syria.

Given the challenges of this year and the importance of allocating as many financial resources to our projects as possible, Still I Rise directors have decided they will continue receiving **€400/500** to cover expenses instead of a salary.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

66 employees (47 working on site, 19 office workers) composed of **25** men and **41** women

ORGANIZATION CHART



WHERE WE WORK

Education centers

Still I Rise's work began in Samos, Greece, one of Europe's worst refugee hotspots. The charity has supplied informal education to thousands of vulnerable teenagers via Mazi, the island's first teenage refugee center, which offers a range of lessons, daily meals, psycho-social support and legal and child protection assistance. The school provides breakfast and lunch to approximately 130 children from Mondays to Fridays in a welcoming, safe environment. Saturdays are set aside for leisure activities.

Still I Rise has extended the Mazi school model used in Samos to its school for girls and boys aged 10 to 14 in Al Dana, Syria, setting up the Ma'an center. The school offers lessons in English, Arabic, maths and IT, and a daily meal. We also distribute school materials and food and sanitation parcels to families.

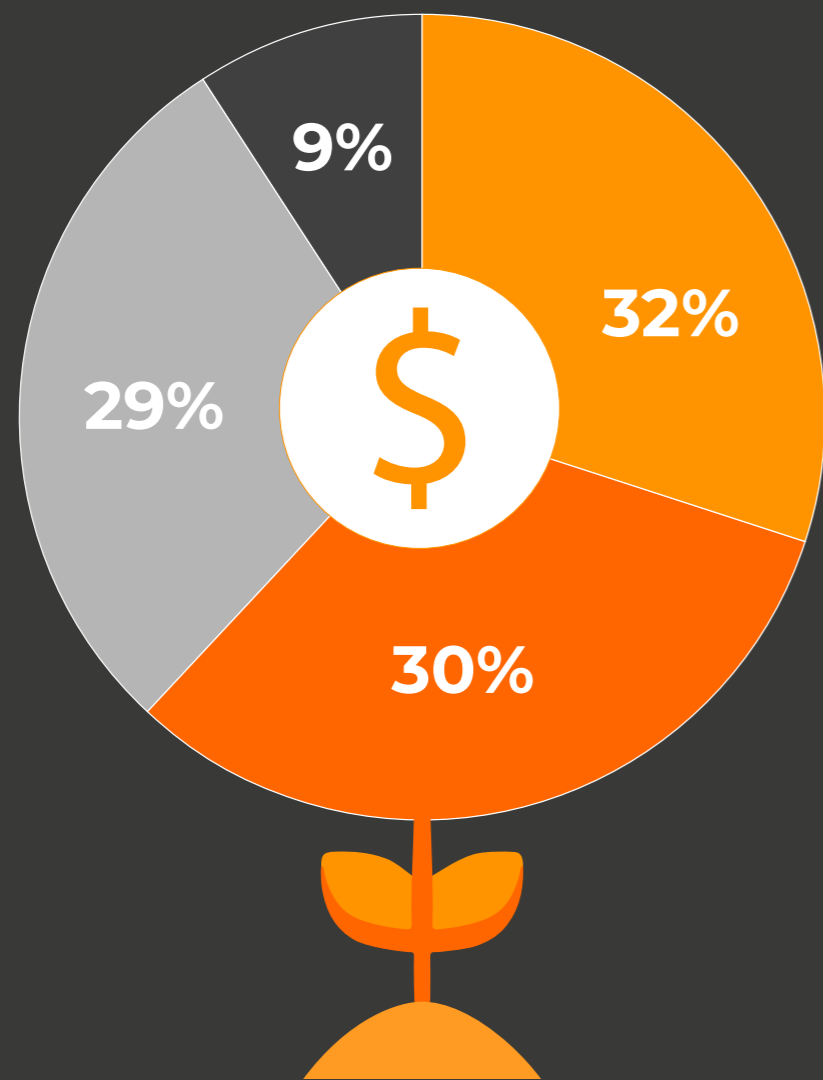
International schools

Still I Rise brings high-quality education to those who could otherwise not afford it.

It is the first non-profit organization in the world to offer the International Baccalaureate pathway exclusively for refugee and vulnerable children. Through its International Schools, it provides a 7-year, high quality international education at no cost to the students, which can open doors to the world's best universities.

In March 2020, the charity set up the Beraber education center for refugees aged 10 to 17 in Gaziantep (Turkey), but Covid-19 has so far prevented this from becoming fully operational. In January 2021, we opened Still I Rise International School in the Nairobi slums in Kenya, the first international school in Africa to educate refugee and vulnerable Kenyan boys and girls.

How is **our commitment** distributed?



- Turkey
- Greece
- North-Western Syria
- Kenya



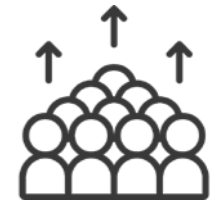
Country profile **Greece**



ADVANCED ENGLISH
STILL I RISE
HOMEWORK BOOK



Capital
ATHENS



Population
10.72 million
(World Bank, 2020)



Refugees
and migrants
119,700
(UNHCR, 2020)



Median age
45.6 years
(Worldometer)



Human
development index
0.888
(2019)

In Greece, public school is compulsory until the age of 15 for all children, including refugees and asylum seekers. However, only a third of the 37,000 migrant children living in Greece were regularly enrolled in 2019.

GREECE

2020 Overview for Still I Rise

In 2020, our work in Greece was challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic and a devastating 7.1 magnitude earthquake that hit the island of Samos in late October.

Just like any school in Greece, we had to close our center from mid-March until June. We stayed open in summer, but then we had to close yet again because of the second lockdown. The earthquake that struck the island in late October damaged our building, making it unfit for use. It was a very difficult year, but we kept going on.

In the onset of the pandemic, with our students stuck in an overcrowded camp with no services, we did what we could to provide aid despite the restrictions in place. Throughout 2020, we managed to support 245 students from 10 different countries.

While our center was closed, we moved our classes online and distributed power banks and phone cards so that our

students could continue studying through WhatsApp. We also handed out paper assignments weekly, divided by subject and level. Lastly, we developed a plan to offer online psychosocial support, doing everything in our power to provide the same sense of protection and empathy that we have always ensured in person. In addition to organizing educational activities and psychosocial support, we also committed to supporting our students and their families by providing for their most urgent needs: every month we distributed food parcels, hygiene kits, clothes, and protective equipment to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

In the few months when we were able to run in-person classes, we worked very hard giving English, Greek, math, science, art, geography, history, computer science, and creative writing lessons. We continued offering psychosocial support activities, which

are essential in restoring a sense of normality in the routines of our students: we held workshops in relaxation, breakdancing, running, physical education, woodcarving, cinema, sewing and gardening. In addition, we also created several clubs, including the 'Green Gang' (beach clean up): a self-defense club, a chess club, a boys club and a girls one.

We did all we could to support the local community. When the pandemic began, we raised funds to donate two monitors and a



ventilator to the intensive care unit of the hospital in Samos; thanks to our help, the facility managed to expand the ward from 4 to 6 beds.

Unfortunately, the pandemic was not the only major setback in 2020: the earthquake at the end of October destroyed the island and took the lives of two local teenagers. We helped the municipal authorities of East Samos in their fundraising efforts, and shared the news with our supporters, encouraging them to back the local population.

OUR RESULTS



GREECE

2020 snapshot

“

The Mazi center was finally able to reopen in the summer, with all Covid-19 precautions being taken. Our students were delighted to get back to school and were diligent in following the precautionary measures put in place, such as mask wearing and social distancing, which surprised us. For two weeks they enthusiastically attended art lessons offered by a special guest, a teacher who helped them decorate the center's walls with designs, feathers and other ornamental objects from the natural world. It felt like the school's life and colour had returned, after months of Covid-related silence and darkness.

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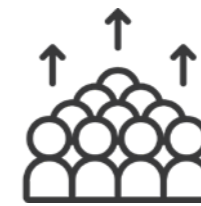
Country profile **N-W Syria**



Children not attending school
+ 500,000
(ACU, 2019)



Population of internally displaced persons
2.7 million
(OCHA, Dec. 2020)



Population living in the area
4 million
(OCHA, Dec. 2020)



% of women and children
80%
(OCHA, Dec. 2020)



Attacks in the area
59 schools attacked
28 hospitals attacked
(Unicef, 2020)

Syria is not a united country: our school is located in the North-west, which is outside Assad's control. Therefore, this information is about such specific area, not the whole of Syria.

NORTH-WESTERN SYRIA

2020 Overview for Still I Rise

In North-western Syria, an entire generation of children has been growing up knowing nothing but war. Today, more than 60% of displaced children have dropped out of school, thus compromising their future as well as the entire community's.

At the beginning of the pandemic, when we were forced to close our school in Greece and our newly opened school in Turkey, we immediately realized the devastating impact that closing schools would have on our students. Building on the experience gained in Greece in providing education to refugee children, we therefore decided to bring our contribution to the northwestern Syrian city of Al Dana, which hosts tens of thousands of internally displaced people.

As a first step, we hired on-site Education and Program Managers who identified a suitable location for our upcoming school. Once it was found, they started and completed the

work needed to make the building accessible to students. After getting all necessary permits from local authorities and hiring a team to run the facility, we had to inform local children about the opening of the school and its activities. The immediate response was encouraging: we received countless enrollment inquiries and officially launched Ma'an at the end of August — after closing for a few weeks due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We initially planned to host 80 to 100 students, but we had to limit enrollments to comply with Covid-19 restrictions. So, we decided to prioritize the most vulnerable students.

Unlike our program in Samos (Greece), where we have always had a relatively high rate of student turnover due to arrivals and departures to and from the island, the student population of Ma'an is more stable: in just four months of opening, we supported 53 students.

OUR RESULTS

Math, Arabic and, above all, English were the first subjects we started teaching. Most of our students had previously dropped out or never attended school as they had been constantly displaced and had to financially help their families. The only way to give them the



opportunity to study was therefore to support households by providing daily meals in the school as well as distributing food parcels, clothes, and other essential goods to students and their families. Another primary need for Ma'an students is coal. They live in self-organized camps for evacuees, where winter has been, at times, lethal. In December, we distributed 620 kg of coal, to be used for cooking and heating their tents.



NORTH-WESTERN SYRIA 2020 snapshot

“

The first day of school was a dream. This is why I decided to stay in Syria despite everything. When I saw the students come into school smiling and with hope in their eyes, I was as happy as a farmer who sees his vegetables growing again for the first time after a drought. We made a huge cake and decorated it with the name Still I Rise, which we cut up and savoured together. It was a beautiful, meaningful moment. We wanted to get across to the students that Ma'an is a welcoming place in which we all share what we have. After we'd eaten the cake, the students spoke to us about their thoughts and dreams, we played games and group activities all day, still just happy to be together.

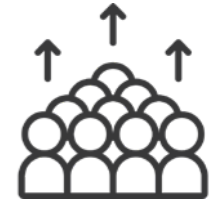
Abdulkafi Alhamdo, Program Manager

”

Country profile **Kenya**



Capital
NAIROBI



Population
53.77 million
(World Bank, 2020)



Human
development index
0.601
(2019)



% of population
below the poverty line
36.1%
(World Bank, 2015)



Refugee and
asylum-seeking
population
508,033
(UNHCR, Jan 2021)

In Kenya, 1.8 million children and adolescents between the age of 6 and 17 do not attend school (UNESCO).

KENYA

2020 Overview for Still I Rise

In January 2020, we began to plan Still I Rise's efforts in Kenya. Over the first few months, we conducted in-depth research into the country and started the process of setting up Still I Rise as a legal entity in Kenya. Although the country went into lockdown in March, introducing a curfew and halting most of the private companies and public services, we were able to achieve this goal in April.

In May, we directed our efforts towards supporting government clinics across Nairobi County by donating masks, hand sanitizers and soaps. These activities are covered in our "Fighting Covid-19 Together" documentary.

In July, when restrictions were lifted, the field team resumed operations and began looking for a suitable building to house the school. In August, we identified an adequate location in the Mathare slum, home to over half a million people: the building in question was inde-

ed an abandoned school.

In September, the lease was finalized and the renovation work started — which continued until December. Meanwhile, we began hiring a group of local auxiliary staff and teachers and launched the selection process for our future students.

Finally, on December 7, we opened the school to a small number of Kenyan and refugee students, offering English, math and sports lessons.

OUR RESULTS





KENYA

2020 snapshot

“

Despite opening for just a few days in 2020 we decided to celebrate Christmas Eve together. We decorated a room and organized a special meal for all our students. We did not want to leave their families out and distributed food to help them to celebrate, too.

It was our first Christmas celebrated with the Kenyan school's children and new colleagues. It was a simple party, but we were happy to spend it with them, encouraged by thoughts of the celebrations to come.

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BERABER

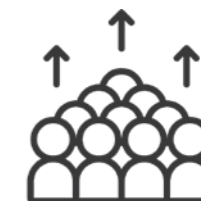


Country profile

Turkey



Capital
ANKARA



Population
84.34 million
(World Bank)



Human
development index
0.820
(2019)



Refugee children
and teenagers not
enrolled in school
400,000
(UNICEF, 2019)



Refugee population
4 million
(UNHCR, 2020)

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world. Out of 4 million, 3.7 million are Syrians. Uganda, the country with the second highest number of refugees, hosts about 1.5 million.

TURKEY

2020 Overview for Still I Rise

In March 2020, we opened an education center for refugee children aged 10 to 12 years old, which was meant to become our first international school. The facility is located in Gaziantep, a city in South-Eastern Turkey, near the Syrian border. Given the bureaucracy needed to open an international school in Turkey, our plan for 2020 was to start our operations as an educational center with English, Turkish, Arabic, and math lessons for about 130 Syrian refugee students, so that we could better prepare them for the next international school program once necessary permits would be in place.

Unfortunately, our program in Turkey had to close a few days after opening due to the pandemic legislation limiting educational center operations.

At the same time, restrictions also had a negative impact on bureaucracy, effectively blocking our progress towards establishing an international school.

During the summer, as local schools reopened, we tried to reopen our center as well, but restrictions were once again imposed on NGO operations just the following day.

Unfortunately, we again had to stop enrollment and personnel recruitment, putting the project on hold until further notice.

OUR RESULTS



ADVOCACY

Advocacy is a fundamental activity of Still I Rise. For us, it means fighting for every single one of our students' rights.

Our financial independence means we are not reliant on governments or bodies. It means complete freedom to work for whatever initiatives, legal causes and campaigns best further our students' rights and help us support them.

2020 was an extremely challenging year, but we continued to fight on our students' behalf, all the same.

This is what we did.

MARCH

Early March 2020: just a few days before the pandemic erupted, tensions between Greece and Turkey heightened, prompting Turkey to open its Greek border. The Greek government responded by making those coming from Turkey ineligible for asylum. At the same time activists and aid workers were attacked by local groups. The situation on the Aegean islands was extremely tense and a Samos camp built to hold 648 housed 7000 people. Together with a further 256 organizations, we called on Greece to abide by international law and the other European Union countries to help by taking some of the asylum seekers stuck in Greece into their own countries:

<https://www.stillirisengo.org/it/news/lettera-aperta/>

Late March 2020: with the onset of the pandemic, we stepped up our earlier demands, on the grounds that transferring those living in overcrowded camps on the Aegean islands to protect them from the virus had become even more urgent:

<https://www.stillirisengo.org/it/news/lettera-aperta-25-marzo/>



APRIL

Early April 2020: our appeals fell on deaf ears, and the miserable conditions our students were living in at the Samos camp were further exacerbated by pandemic-related lockdown. In March and April, thanks to the legal support of the Refugee Law Clinic in Berlin, we successfully campaigned for the rights of seven unaccompanied refugee students at the European Court of Human Rights, which upheld our

claim that the treatment being meted out to them was inhumane and degrading, and demanded that the Greek government move them to more suitable accommodation immediately: <https://www.stillirisengo.org/it/news/advocacy-cedu-msna-samos/>

Late April 2020: the situation in the Samos hotspot worsened progressively, and three fires broke out on a single weekend. Together with other organizations working in Samos, we appealed yet again to the Greek and European institutions to move those stuck on the Greek islands to more suitable locations in Greece and other European Union member states: <https://www.stillirisengo.org/it/news/lettera-aperta-aiutate-grecia-evacuazione/>

April 2020: the voluntary transfers of unaccompanied children to other European states began. This continued throughout 2020.



MAY

May 2020: we started work on opening Ma'an, our education centre in the north-west of Syria.



JUNE

June 2020: while most of the Covid restrictions imposed in March were lifted elsewhere in Greece, the refugee camps remained locked down. Together with other organizations, we demanded an explanation of this discriminatory practice:

<https://www.stillirisengo.org/it/news/dichiarazione-estensione-misure-restrittive-richiedenti-asilo/>

AUGUST

August 2020: our center in the north-west of Syria, Ma'an, finally opened. With around four million internal refugees, 80% of whom were women and children, the schooling opportunities available to Syrian children were extremely limited.

Together with our local team, we worked to raise awareness of the country's plight and the unacceptable conditions in which millions of people were being forced to live:

<https://www.stillirisengo.org/it/news/still-i-rise-siria-maan/>

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

September/October 2020: Europe's largest refugee camp, Moria on Lesbos, was razed to the ground in a fire, leaving 13,000 people without shelter.

We worked to keep the public informed, with live Facebook sessions and posts. We also worked with other local organizations to call once again for an end to EU containment and deterrence policies and a greater focus on relocating refugees to other European countries.

Together with Choose Love and a further five organizations, we promoted a petition which gained 180,000 signatures in just a few days, as well as the support of over 250 NGOs:

<https://www.change.org/p/commissione-europea-incendio-al-campo-di-moria-lesbo-urgente-appello-per-un-evacuazione-immediata>, reiterating our demands a month after the fire.

NOVEMBER

November 2020: Rizzoli published 'Attraverso i nostri occhi' - Through Our Eyes, a book of photographs and the culmination of the work of Nicoletta Novara, together with students at our Mazi center on Samos. Their photos and words immerse readers in the Samos refugee camp and the everyday joys and dreams of our students.

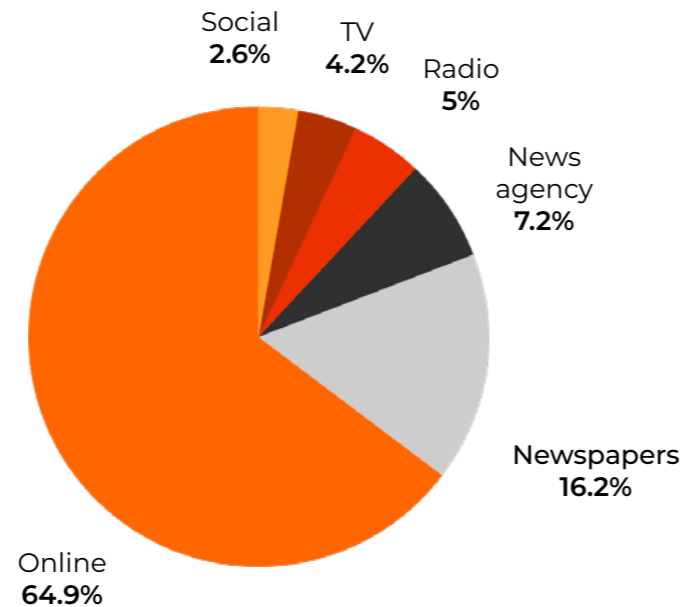


DECEMBER

December 2020: the Through Our Eyes mini-series came out on our social media channels via brief episodes featuring interviews with some of the students who had taken the photographs contained in the book, with each episode focusing on a social theme of importance to them.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PRESS OFFICE

If 2020 was a year of pandemic-related paralysis all over the world, the same cannot be said of Still I Rise and its communications campaigns. Over this 12 month period, our Press and Public Relations Office stepped up its work, with the result that our visibility increased exponentially over the previous year, moving from 127 press releases in 2019 to 402 in 2020, an increase of 216.5%. We launched 21 press campaigns, which reached over 500 journalists in Italy and abroad with more than 100 interviews organized by our press office. 66% of our releases focused wholly or largely on our organization, one of its members or the work we do. The remaining 34% were designed to get across our point of view on wider-ranging themes. This category also encompassed citations and initiative reports. 64.9% of releases were online,



with the remaining 35.1% being split between newspapers and magazines, TV, radio, and agency work.

We also set up two blogs in the Huffington Post – in Still I Rise’s name and that of its president – and obtained a publication space on the Pressenza agency’s site. As regards institutional lobbying, we liaised with dozens of political figures in the European and Italian parliaments to raise awareness of our advocacy work. Focusing on themes with the

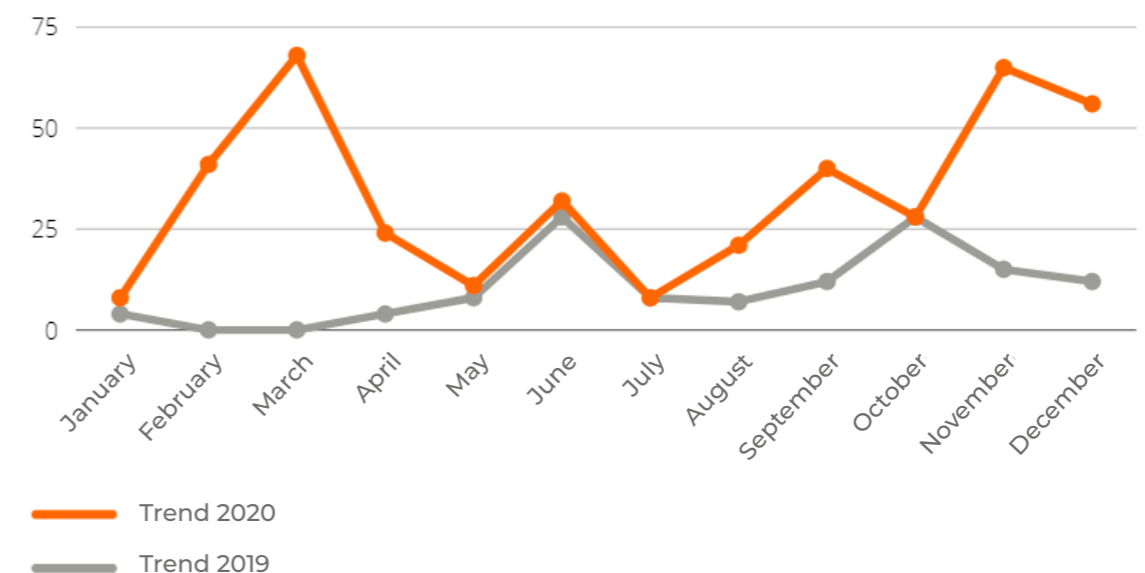
greatest resonance in the press, Nicolò Govoni’s nomination for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize was a key issue in the first part of the year.

Subsequently, exposés and oversight in international news hotspots and on the opening of new schools took up an increasing amount of Still I Rise’s attention. Towards the end of the year, the spotlight was shone on the web series *Through Our Eyes*, with its direct accounts by teenagers of the Samos hotspot and their contributions to the photographic exhibition of the same name, which culminated in the

book *Attraverso i nostri occhi* (Bur Rizzoli).

2020 was thus undoubtedly a year of growth and affirmation on an organizational communication level.

2019 - 2020 IN COMPARISON





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SOCIAL

